



COMMUNICATING WITH THE PUBLIC

Presenter: Allison Silberberg, Vice Mayor, Alexandria, Virginia

Public Management

Video Transcript

[TEXT: Young African Leaders Initiative
Online Training Series]

TEXT: Communicating with the Public]

[TEXT: Allison Silberberg, Vice Mayor, Alexandria, Virginia]

I'm Allison Silberberg, and I'm the vice mayor of Alexandria, Virginia, an historic city near the nation's capital, Washington D.C. And I'm going to talk about communicating with the public.

A critical part of our democracy is freedom of the press. The media are in direct communication with the public. This communication is absolutely essential to a vibrant and healthy democracy. I reach out on a regular basis to the media in order to ensure that the public knows everything that I know. The public deserves to know what their government is doing. The people can then decide what it believes about an issue. There is a phrase in journalism, "Tell me the facts, and I will interpret. Do not tell me the story. Just tell me the facts." The public needs and is entitled to know the truth from its government, not propaganda. This is the right of every citizen. It is very precious.

At times, I have written a column for the local media. This has proven highly effective, because it gave me an opportunity to speak directly to the people of my community. I also communicate by sending a monthly email to friends and citizens across the community. The purpose is to let them know what is going on and how I feel about various issues. In the email, I include information about my monthly coffee, where citizens can join me and let me know their concerns and ideas.

A lot of people email us directly to let us know their perspective on various issues. I welcome their input and find it very helpful. I answer every email in a timely manner, usually within three business days. If people take the time to write me, I want them to know that their input is appreciated and helpful and that I have heard them. I also have a website. I'm on Facebook, and I have a Twitter account.

For me, it is critical to keep those conversations constructive, helpful and proactive. Being accessible and approachable are important aspects of my service. I have an administrative aide. He and I both have email addresses and cell phone numbers that are listed publicly. We are very responsive. I am also privileged to have a number of supporters and friends who have volunteered to be part of our team.

There are countless events in the city, and I always do my best to attend as many as possible. Being present is a significant part of communicating with the public. At an event, a citizen can come up to me and ask me a question or tell me their perspective regarding a certain issue. It is a lot easier and less intimidating to approach me at a public function rather than make an





appointment to see me at City Hall. I always want to make it as easy as possible for people to reach out to me.

Communicating with the public is one of the most important parts of my job!

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